(5) NH No. 62 with Bangladesh at Baghmara.

(6) NH No. 151 with Bangladesh at Sutarkandi.

(7) NH No. 152 with Bhutan starting from Patacharkuchi.

Sick Tea Gardens in Barak Valley Assam

1136. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a number of tea gardens in Barak Valley, the Southern part of Assam have become sick during the last three years;

(b) if so, the number of such sick tea gardens and the number of tea gardens workers affected; and

(c) the steps being taken by Government to revive the sick tea gardens, more particularly the State owned tea Gardens, with details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) and (b) According to a survey conducted by Tea Board in late 1998 around 20 tea gardens in the Southern Assam have been found to be sick/weak. The number of sick/weak gardens in 1993 was 30 out of which 10 sick gardens have been revived and are stated to be functioning well. Information in respect of the number of tea garden workers affected is being collected from the concerned State Govt. and will be laid on the table of the House.

(c) With a view to revive sick/weak tea gardens Tea Board has extended the following benefits.

(i) Exemption to the contribution of National Tea Research Foundation for a period of 5 years from the date of taking over of sick tea gardens by a new management.

(ii) To consider the applications of such gardens for financial assistance even if the accumulated Provident Fund liability exceed Rs. 10,000/- (for regular gardens Board's financial assistance in the normal circumstances is not made available if the outstanding P.F. dues exceed Rs. 10,000/-).

(iii) Concession in membership with the Tea Research Associations so as to enable them avail the technical support for a period of 5 years from the date of assumption of charge by the new management.

(iv) Extension of moratorium period for the repayment of the outstanding dues in respect of all the past loans availed under the Board's ongoing schemes.

There is only one tea estate of Tea Trading Corporation of India Ltd. (TTCI), a wholly owned subsidiary of State Trading Corporation namely Pathani Tea Estate situated in Cachar Distt. in the State of Assam. Due to acute financial crunch faced by TTCI it is not possible for it to generate funds for revival of this garden.

Decline in Indian Exports

1137. MISS MABEL REBELLO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Indian Exports have started declining for the last nine months of this financial year, particularly textiles, leather goods, gems and jewelleries;

(b) if so, the reason therefor;

(c) whether the Indian Exporters are suffering because of the signing of WTO; and

(d) if not, what are the benefits coming after signing of WTO?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) and (b) As per DGCI&S provisional data, exports during April-October, 1999 are estimated at US $ 20757 million which is 10% higher than the corresponding period of last year. The provisional disaggregated data, available for April-August, 1999 show that most of the major manufacturing sectors such as Gems and Jewellery, Textiles, Chemical and related products and Engineering goods have achieved a positive growth during this period. As far as Leather goods is concerned, Leather footwear has achieved a positive growth. However, other leather manufactures witnessed a decline.

(c) and (d) WTO provides for a rule based trading system under which Members have undertaken market access commitments which facilitate trade by improved transparency and predictability.